

# Aging Population Policy Framework

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## Background and Context

Alberta's population is steadily increasing in age, as are the populations of other Canadian provinces and developed nations across the world. This is due to a combination of factors, including longer life expectancies, decreasing fertility rates, and the advancing age of the “baby boom” generation — those born between 1946 and 1965.

Between 2011 and 2021, the percentage of Albertans aged 65 and older will increase from approximately 11 per cent to 15 per cent of the total population. By 2031, when the last member of the baby boomers reaches 65 years of age, it is projected that about one in five Albertans will be a senior. Alberta's future seniors are expected to be more diverse than ever before, with varying skills, abilities, support systems, living arrangements, levels of education, health and wealth — all influenced by their diverse experiences and differing circumstances.


This demographic reality will have profound and lasting economic and social implications for our province, leading to opportunities and challenges across a wide range of policy areas. Responding to these opportunities and challenges will necessitate the involvement of a variety of partners in areas such as finance, transportation, housing, health, infrastructure, municipal affairs, community services, public safety and others. It will require action on the part of governments, the private and non-profit sectors, communities, families and individuals.

The *Aging Population Policy Framework* defines and articulates the Government of Alberta's roles and responsibilities in responding to the needs of an aging population. It is intended to provide clarity to other governments, sectors, stakeholders and all Albertans about how the Government of Alberta intends to act in a number of key areas.

The purpose of the Framework is to:

- Identify the Government of Alberta's role in meeting the needs of Alberta's aging population so that Albertans have the information and support they require to plan for their senior years.
- Communicate the Alberta government's key policy directions in preparing for Alberta's aging population, and its desired objectives in those areas.



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- Provide an overall context for the coordinated development of policies, programs and services to meet the needs of Alberta's aging population.
  - Provide a framework to inform the allocation of resources so that programs and services are affordable to taxpayers on a sustained basis.
  - Foster collaboration and integration among Alberta government ministries, the federal government, municipal governments and other community partners so that programs and services for the aging population are efficiently and effectively delivered to Albertans.

The development of the Framework has been informed by the input of Albertans through the work of the Demographic Planning Commission, which solicited Albertans' views on the major issues facing Alberta's aging population. In its Findings Report, the Commission identified a number of policy areas that should be addressed in developing the Framework.

The Framework has also been informed by other quantitative and qualitative sources, including Census data, additional statistical information, and trend analysis regarding Alberta's aging population. In addition, a cross-ministerial approach has been employed in developing the Framework to reflect the perspectives, plans and collaborative efforts of Alberta government ministries that have responsibility for issues relating to the aging population.

## Roles and Responsibilities

In the context of an aging population, the Government of Alberta has a role in three key areas:


- **Setting province-wide policy directions concerning seniors and an aging population.** The Alberta government articulates how the province will position itself to prepare for a growing aging population, and develops forward-looking, adaptive and evidence-informed policy on key issues relating to aging.
- **Facilitating collaboration among individuals, communities and governments to meet the needs of seniors.** The Alberta government works with the private sector, the non-profit and voluntary sector, municipal governments and other community partners in new and existing partnerships to identify and respond to the changing needs and priorities of Albertans as they age.

- **Providing supports and services to Alberta's seniors.** The Alberta government supports the provision of effective, efficient and affordable programs and services that have a meaningful impact in improving outcomes for Albertans as they age. This includes supporting seniors who cannot meet their basic needs, and collaborating with community partners to provide coordinated and integrated supports and services for seniors who need them. This also involves supporting programs and services that are inclusive and responsive to the diverse needs of an aging population, including seniors of different cultural and ethnic backgrounds, and those with disabilities.

Individuals and families, the private and non-profit sectors, municipal governments, and other governments also play key roles.

- **Individuals and families.** Individuals have primary responsibility for preparing for their senior years. This includes meeting their own basic needs, and securing the resources they will require for the lifestyle they choose as they age. Individuals, their families and support networks also play important roles in supporting wellness and well-being, such as encouraging healthy lifestyles and accessing medical care when necessary.
- **Private and non-profit sectors.** The private sector responds to the ever-changing demands of the marketplace, and is a key source of innovation, addressing evolving market demands with new and different services. Private sector organizations in Alberta communities offer a wide range of products and services in a variety of areas, including housing, finance, transportation and recreation. Local employers also play an important role, providing a range of opportunities where older Albertans can continue to build and contribute skills and experience, mentor younger workers, maintain social linkages and earn income. Alberta's non-profit sector offers many community-based services to aging Albertans based on identified needs at the grassroots level, and delivers these services with the support of other community partners. The non-profit sector will continue to play a crucial part in helping the Alberta government identify and respond to aging Albertans in need.
- **Municipal governments.** Municipal governments are responsible for providing leadership and direction on civic and community issues. As such, they are in a unique position to facilitate collaboration in their communities to identify and respond to the changing needs of aging Albertans. This includes developing age-friendly environments through choices in municipal land-use, public spaces, infrastructure, housing and transportation.



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- **Other governments.** The federal government provides the primary source of income support for low-income seniors, through programs like Old Age Security and the Guaranteed Income Supplement, and manages and administers the Canada Pension Plan. The Alberta government collaborates with the federal government and other provincial and territorial governments to address issues of significance for seniors.

## Principles For Government Decision-Making

The Framework is designed to foster a coordinated and aligned approach across the Government of Alberta in developing policies, programs and services that meet the changing needs of Alberta's aging population. In fulfilling its role in meeting the needs and priorities of an aging population, the Government of Alberta will act consistently with the principles outlined below.

Alberta government policies, programs and services will be:

- Fair and equitable to future generations.
- Aimed at encouraging the independence of Albertans.
- Proactive and flexible to changing circumstances.
- Aligned towards achieving outcomes.
- Affordable to taxpayers.
- Effective and efficient at achieving intended objectives.
- Structured to assist Albertans most in need.
- Informed by evidence and input.
- Collaborative with communities.
- Respectful of individual choice.



## Outcomes

The Framework establishes eight outcomes that reflect the broad goals Alberta will pursue in preparing to meet the needs of an aging population. All sectors, along with individual Albertans, have a role in achieving the following outcomes:

- Albertans have access to adequate financial resources to meet their needs in their senior years.
- Alberta seniors are able to reside in the place that is appropriate for their circumstances.
- Alberta seniors have access to a range of continuing care services that enable them to reside in an environment that is appropriate for their circumstances.
- Alberta seniors are supported in maintaining optimum health as they age.
- Albertans have access to safe, affordable, appropriate and accessible transportation options during their senior years.
- Alberta seniors are supported in maintaining optimum independence in making decisions about their lives and are free from abuse.
- Alberta seniors are engaged as full and welcome participants in their communities.
- Alberta seniors are able to easily access Alberta government programs, services and supports.

## Strategic Policy Directions

A number of Alberta government ministries currently work in collaboration to meet the needs of seniors through the development and delivery of policy, programs and services for seniors. The Framework aligns these efforts under an integrated set of strategic policy directions in eight key areas of significance for Alberta's aging population.

These strategic policy directions provide guidance on the overall approaches the Government of Alberta will pursue in responding to the needs of future seniors. The directions build on existing initiatives and partnerships within the government. They are designed to improve the cohesion of policies, programs and services in achieving common outcomes to prepare for and meet the needs of an aging population.

## I. Financial Security and Income

### Outcome

Albertans have access to adequate financial resources to meet their needs in their senior years.

### Policy Directions

- Assist Albertans in planning for their financial needs as seniors.
- Support Albertans who choose to remain engaged in the workforce in their senior years.
- Enable appropriate and effective allocation of government-funded financial supports for seniors who lack the financial resources to meet their basic needs.

### Related Linkages

- *Building and Educating Tomorrow's Workforce*
- *Mature Workers in Alberta and British Columbia: Understanding the Issues and Opportunities*
- *Living Literacy: A Literacy Framework for Alberta's Next Generation*

## II. Housing and Aging in the Right Place

### Outcome

Alberta seniors are able to reside in the place that is appropriate for their circumstances.

### Policy Directions

- Support and foster the development of sufficient affordable housing units for those seniors most in need.
- Encourage market innovation and greater market choice in housing options, especially in rural and remote areas of the province.
- Facilitate efficient provision of reasonable government-funded home support services to those seniors who need them.

### Related Linkages

- *A Plan for Alberta: Ending Homelessness in 10 Years*
- *Continuing Care Strategy — Aging in the Right Place*
- *The Alberta Injury Control Strategy*
- *Barrier-Free Design Guide*



### III. Continuing Care

#### Outcome

Alberta seniors have access to a range of continuing care services that enable them to reside in an environment that is appropriate for their circumstances.

#### Policy Directions

- Foster the development of an increased, diverse supply of affordable living options to enable Albertans to age in the right place.
- Increase the supply and range of home care and community care services to assist Albertans to receive services in the community.
- Monitor the provision of health care and accommodation services provided in long-term care facilities, supportive living units and through home care to ensure that safe and quality services are provided.
- Provide support for an appropriate level of services to facilitate aging-in-place among seniors who are in home living settings.

#### Related Linkages

- *Continuing Care Strategy — Aging in the Right Place*
- *Vision 2020: The Future of Health Care in Alberta*
- *A Foundation for Alberta's Health System — Report of the Minister's Advisory Committee on Health*
- *Putting People First: Part One, Recommendations for an Alberta Health Act*

## IV. Healthy Aging and Health Care

### Outcome

Alberta seniors are supported in maintaining optimum health as they age.

### Policy Directions

- Facilitate community and individual efforts to engage in healthy living practices that will help achieve healthy aging.
- Support the provision of timely access to efficiently delivered, high-quality health care services that meet the needs of seniors.
- Match Alberta's health workforce supply to demand for services.

### Related Linkages

- Vision 20/20: The Future of Health Care in Alberta*
- Continuing Care Strategy — Aging in the Right Place*
- Building and Educating Tomorrow's Workforce*
- Health Workforce Action Plan*
- Alberta Injury Control Strategy*
- Framework for a Healthy Alberta*
- Active Alberta: A Recreation, Active Living and Sport Policy (draft)*

## V. Transportation and Mobility

### Outcome

Albertans have access to safe, affordable, appropriate and accessible transportation options during their senior years.

### Policy Directions

- Support the ability of Albertans aged 65 and older to continue driving safely.
- Support the development of affordable, accessible and appropriate transportation options for seniors who are unable to or do not wish to drive.

### Related Linkages

- Alberta Traffic Safety Plan*
- 20-Year Capital Plan*
- Land-use Framework*



## VI. Safety and Security

### Outcome

Alberta seniors are supported in maintaining optimum independence in making decisions about their lives and are free from abuse.

### Policy Directions

- Increase awareness about elder abuse and neglect and how to prevent and respond to it.
- Enhance the capacity of Alberta communities to respond to situations of elder abuse.
- Encourage advance planning with respect to financial and personal decisions.
- Facilitate the maintenance of personal autonomy with respect to personal and financial decision-making.
- Provide family and community caregivers with access to supports in their communities, which reflect and address the challenges of caring for an aging population with changing circumstances.

### Related Linkages

- *Strategy for the Prevention of Family Violence and Bullying*
- *Continuing Care Strategy — Aging in the Right Place*
- *Safe Communities Initiative*

## VII. Supportive Communities

### Outcome

Alberta seniors are engaged as full and welcome participants in their communities.

### Policy Directions

- Encourage and support Alberta communities in becoming age-friendly.
- Support and encourage the recognition of seniors' contributions to Alberta communities.
- Work with non-profit and voluntary sector organizations in developing and providing services and supports to seniors that reflect community needs and values.

### Related Linkages

- *Federal/Provincial/Territorial Ministers Responsible for Seniors — Age-Friendly Rural and Remote Communities: A Guide*
- *Alberta Nonprofit/Voluntary Sector Initiative*

## VIII. Access to Government

### Outcome

Alberta seniors are able to easily access Alberta government programs, services and supports.

### Policy Directions

- Examine opportunities to align Alberta government programs and services to make them more accessible to seniors who are in need.
- Explore ways of improving the connection between Alberta government-funded programs and services and those seniors in need.

### Related Linkages

- *Service Alberta, Citizen Services Initiative*



## Implementation

The Framework sets out the Government of Alberta's overall strategic directions and desired long-term policy outcomes regarding current and future seniors. Pursuing these directions and outcomes will require ongoing collaborative work among Alberta government ministries. It will also require enhanced cooperation, partnership and effort on the part of all sectors and individual Albertans.

Alberta Seniors and Community Supports (ASCS) is responsible for encouraging and supporting the independence, well-being and inclusion of seniors through cross-ministerial collaboration on policies, programs, services, and supports. Reflecting this responsibility, ASCS will facilitate the implementation of the Framework and the coordinated development of policies, programs and supports consistent with the Framework.

Through collaboration among appropriate Alberta government ministries, municipalities, and community partners, implementation of the Framework will help Alberta respond to the changing needs of the aging population, and achieve shared, lasting, positive outcomes for Alberta's current and future seniors.





## PREFACE

Alberta's population is steadily increasing in age, as are populations in other Canadian provinces and developed nations across the world. This is due to a combination of factors, including longer life expectancies, decreasing fertility rates, and the advancing age of the "baby boom" generation — those born between 1946 and 1965.

- Currently, about one in 10 Albertans is 65 years of age or older. Each month, over 2000 Albertans reach the age of 65.
- The first baby boomer in Alberta will turn 65 in 2011.
- It is estimated that between 2011 and 2021, the number of seniors in Alberta will increase from 413,000 to 642,400. In that time, the percentage of seniors will increase from approximately 11 per cent to 15 per cent of Alberta's total population.
- By 2031, it is projected that there will be more than 923,000 seniors in Alberta, or about one in five Albertans.

This demographic reality will have profound and lasting economic and social implications. It will fundamentally affect the labour force; the financial system, including investments and pensions; the housing sector; the demand for health services and supports; the need for community-based supports and services, including transportation; and the ways that businesses, charities, governments, and other organizations interact with society. Responding to these challenges and opportunities will require action on the part of governments, the non-profit and private sectors, communities, families and individuals.

The *Aging Population Policy Framework* is designed to foster a holistic approach to meeting the needs of

Each month, over 2,000 Albertans reach the age of 65 and the first of the baby boomers will turn 65 in 2011.

This demographic reality will have profound and lasting economic and social implications.

Responding to these challenges and opportunities will require action on the part of governments, the non-profit and private sectors, communities, families and individuals.

Alberta's current and future seniors. It sets out how the Government of Alberta will respond in integrated ways to meet the changing needs of an aging population, and it clarifies the role the Alberta government will play in providing assistance to future seniors who are most in need.

## BACKGROUND




The proportion of Alberta's population over 65 years of age will steadily increase in the years ahead, largely due to the size of the baby boomer generation, which represents the largest age cohort in the province. Between 2011 and 2021, the percentage of Albertans aged 65 and older will increase from approximately 11 per cent to 15 per cent of the total population. By 2031, when the last member of the baby boomers reaches 65 years of age, it is projected that about one in five Albertans will be a senior.

Seniors are a diverse group. The current cohort of seniors spans more than two generations with an age range from 65 to over 100 years. These individuals have varying skills, abilities, support systems, living arrangements, levels of education, health and wealth — all influenced by their diverse experiences and differing circumstances. It is expected that future seniors will be no less diverse; in fact, given the evolution of society and the global economy, it is likely they will be more so than current seniors.

The needs and circumstances of Albertans are changing as they age. The decisions and choices that Albertans make throughout the course of their lives can have a profound impact on their needs and circumstances in their senior years. A number of trends have emerged among Alberta seniors, influenced by the province's growth and evolution, various socio-economic factors and individual choices. As the sizeable baby boomer generation continues to age, it is expected that the following trends will continue to be evident.

- *Formal levels of education are increasing.* Levels of educational attainment have been steadily increasing over the last three decades; this trend is reflected among Alberta seniors. In 1976, more than half (56.4 per cent) of Alberta seniors had less than a Grade 9 education and only about two per cent had earned a university degree or higher. By 2006, the proportion of seniors who had earned a university degree had increased to almost 10 per cent. On average, higher levels of educational attainment are associated with higher incomes, differing patterns of labour force participation and career choices, better overall health, and greater engagement in volunteer and civic participation.



-  *Incomes of seniors have been rising steadily over time.* In general, the incomes of seniors have been steadily rising over the last several decades. The average pre-tax income of senior families in Alberta increased from \$46,700 in 1986, to \$60,870 in 2006. During the same time frame, the income of unattached senior males rose from \$23,100 to \$27,700; and the income of unattached senior females rose from \$20,300 in 1986 to \$26,700 in 2006.<sup>1</sup> It is expected that in the future the incomes of seniors will continue to increase, albeit at a slower rate, due in large part to the participation of baby boomer women in the labour force. However, there will continue to be seniors who face low-income situations, though it is important to consider that income is only one component of financial security. A senior's expenditures must also be considered, especially as costs associated with food, shelter, and other items can vary greatly depending on choice, availability and need.
-  *More income comes from private sources.* Almost all Albertans aged 65 and older received some income from government transfer payments in 2006 (e.g., federal Old Age Security and Guaranteed Income Supplement payments and provincial payments from the Alberta Seniors Benefit program). However, the proportion of income that seniors receive from government transfers has been declining over time, while the proportion of income from private sources and the Canada Pension Plan (e.g., private pensions, Canada Pension Plan payments, employment earnings and investment income) has been increasing. In 2006, the majority of Alberta seniors' average total income came from private sources (62.8 per cent), though this may change in the years ahead. Future seniors also have access to a growing number of financial instruments to assist them in planning and saving for their senior years (e.g., Tax-Free Savings Accounts, RRSPs, etc.).
-  *Albertans are remaining in the workforce longer.* Almost 16 per cent of Albertans aged 65 and older were employed in 2008. Of this group, approximately 61 per cent were employed full time. Female seniors are more likely than male seniors to work part time, with 52.7 per cent of employed female seniors working part time, compared to 32.3 per cent of male seniors. Those living in urban areas are more likely to work as employees, while those living in rural areas are more likely to be self-employed. The reasons that seniors remain in the workforce are not always financial. For many individuals, employment provides a source of fulfillment and enjoyment. It is also a way of remaining physically and mentally active, and facilitates social

<sup>1</sup> Financial comparisons based on 2006 constant dollars.

connectedness. It is expected that many future seniors will wish to remain in the workforce beyond the traditional retirement age, although they may opt to do so on a part-time or more flexible basis.

- *Most aging Albertans live in their private dwellings.* In 2006, 71 per cent of Albertans aged 65 and older lived in homes that they owned, and an estimated 19 per cent lived in rental accommodations. Only about seven per cent lived in provincial housing settings such as seniors' lodges, and three per cent lived in long-term care facilities. About 80 per cent of Albertans aged 65 and older were mortgage-free in 2006. However, the proportion of seniors with a mortgage has been gradually increasing since 1996.
- *The health of seniors is generally improving.* The overall life expectancy and health of seniors continues to improve due to gains in preventive care, treatment and management of disease. Moreover, determinants of health such as educational attainment and income have been improving over time, making it likely that a greater proportion of future seniors will report they are in very good or excellent health. However, the incidence of certain conditions in the general population, including obesity, type II diabetes, high blood pressure, arthritis and other chronic illnesses, means that many of tomorrow's seniors may experience some significant health challenges.
- *There is continued in-migration to Alberta.* Over the last several years, Alberta has welcomed large numbers of Canadians from other provinces and individuals from other countries, who have come to seek opportunities and enjoy what Alberta has to offer.

These and other trends will have many implications for future seniors and the way they live their lives. They will also have implications for governments, businesses, non-profit and voluntary organizations, and other sectors which provide services and supports to seniors.

## POLICY CONTEXT

Responding to the changing needs of an aging population will necessitate the involvement of a variety of partners in areas such as finance, transportation, housing, health, infrastructure, municipal affairs, community services, public safety and others. From the perspective of the Government of Alberta, a number of recent strategies have been developed which consider issues relating to the needs of current and future Alberta seniors. These include the:

- *Continuing Care Strategy — Aging in the Right Place;*
- *Vision 2020: The Future of Health Care in Alberta;*
- *Building and Educating Tomorrow's Workforce; and*
- *Strategy for the Prevention of Family Violence and Bullying.*

The *Aging Population Policy Framework* provides the opportunity to define and articulate the Alberta government's roles and responsibilities in responding to the needs of an aging population. It is intended to provide clarity to other governments, sectors, stakeholders and all Albertans about how the Government of Alberta intends to act in a number of key areas, and how publicly-funded resources should be allocated and optimized in the context of a growing and aging population. This will assist families and individuals, municipal governments, and other sectors, in planning accordingly for the future. It will also help ensure that government-funded programs and services remain affordable to taxpayers, over the long term, so they are able to continue assisting Albertans in need on a sustained and predictable basis.

The *Aging Population Policy Framework* provides the opportunity to define and articulate the Alberta government's roles and responsibilities in responding to the needs of an aging population.

The Framework is also intended to facilitate collaborative and cooperative policy development among various government ministries and to support enhanced policy and program alignment. A larger and more diverse aging population will necessitate enhanced collaboration and integration among multiple ministries that provide programs, services and supports to seniors. Aligning the Alberta government's approach within an overall framework will help to support the development of consistent and coordinated policies and programs to achieve desired outcomes.



The Framework has been informed by the input of Albertans, through the work of the Demographic Planning Commission. Appointed in May 2008, the Commission engaged over 100 stakeholder organizations in dialogue sessions held throughout Alberta, and solicited public input through an internet-based survey in which over 10,000 Albertans participated. Input was gathered from a wide range of Albertans of various ages and from urban and rural locations.

Through these efforts, the Commission solicited the views of Albertans on the major issues facing Alberta's aging population, and their opinions on how these issues should be addressed. The Commission also gathered input regarding Albertans' perspectives about the roles and responsibilities of individuals, families, communities and governments in meeting the needs of Alberta's aging population.

The Commission used its expertise and background in reviewing and analyzing the large volume of input from Albertans. In its *Findings Report*, the Commission identified a number of policy areas that should be addressed in developing the Framework.

The Framework has also been informed by other quantitative and qualitative sources, including Census data, additional research and trend analysis regarding Alberta's aging population. In addition, a cross-ministerial approach has been employed in developing the Framework to reflect the perspectives, plans and collaborative efforts of Alberta government ministries that have responsibility for issues relating to the aging population.

Appointed in May 2008, the Commission engaged over 100 stakeholder organizations in dialogue sessions held throughout Alberta, and solicited public input through an internet-based survey in which over 10,000 Albertans participated.

# PURPOSE

The purpose of the *Aging Population Policy Framework* is to:

- Identify the Government of Alberta's role in meeting the needs of Alberta's aging population so that Albertans have the information and support they require to plan for their senior years.
- Communicate the Alberta government's key policy directions in preparing for Alberta's aging population and its desired objectives in those areas.
- Provide an overall context for the coordinated development of policies, programs, and services to meet the needs of Alberta's aging population.
- Provide a framework to inform the allocation of resources so that programs and services are affordable to taxpayers on a sustained basis.
- Foster collaboration and integration among Alberta government ministries, the federal government, municipal governments and other community partners so that programs and services for the aging population are efficiently and effectively delivered to Albertans.

# ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The *Aging Population Policy Framework* articulates the Alberta government's strategic policy directions in relation to its roles in preparing for Alberta's aging population. However, addressing the needs and priorities of the aging population is not solely the responsibility of the Government of Alberta. Individual Albertans and their families, Alberta communities, and other governments also have various roles and responsibilities in this regard.

## The Role of the Government of Alberta

Clarifying and articulating the Government of Alberta's roles and responsibilities as they relate to an aging population will help individuals, families, communities and municipalities plan and prepare for the years and decades ahead. In the context of an aging population, the Government of Alberta has roles in three key areas:

1. Setting province-wide policy directions concerning seniors and an aging population.

The Government of Alberta plays an important role in setting province-wide directions that articulate how the province will position itself to prepare for a growing and aging population. Consistent with those directions, the Alberta government will continue to develop forward-looking, adaptive and evidence-informed policy on key issues relating to aging. This involves:

- providing provincial leadership in identifying and responding to the opportunities and challenges associated with an aging population;
- coordinating and aligning provincial policies to address the needs and priorities of Alberta's aging population;
- encouraging and supporting communities in raising awareness about the changing needs of Alberta's aging population;
- supporting the creation of age-friendly environments in Alberta communities; and
- fostering the development of a province-wide culture that respects and values the opportunities and benefits of an aging population.



2. Facilitating collaboration among individuals, communities and governments to meet the needs of seniors.

The Alberta government also works collaboratively to support municipal governments, community partners, individuals and families in fulfilling their roles and responsibilities in meeting the needs of Albertans throughout their lives.

This includes:

- raising awareness among Albertans about planning for their futures as they age, and informing and encouraging them to prepare for their senior years;
- working with the private sector, the non-profit and voluntary sector, municipal governments and other community partners, in new and existing partnerships to identify and respond to the changing needs and priorities of Albertans as they age;
- undertaking initiatives that enable and support Albertans in maintaining self-reliance and independence as they age; and
- supporting Albertans who require assistance in providing care to aging family members.

3. Providing supports and services to Alberta's seniors.

The Alberta government also has a role in the provision of effective, efficient and affordable programs and services that have a meaningful impact in improving outcomes for Albertans as they age.

In some cases, these programs and services are delivered directly by the Alberta government; in others, they are delivered by community partners, on behalf of government, to provide assistance to those seniors most in need. This also involves supporting programs and services that are inclusive and responsive to the diverse needs of an aging population, including seniors of different cultural and ethnic backgrounds, and those with disabilities. The Alberta government is responsible for:

- supporting senior Albertans who cannot meet their basic needs;
- delivering programs, services and supports that are efficient and effective in achieving desired outcomes for Albertans as they age, and are affordable on a sustained basis;
- collaborating with community partners to support the provision of coordinated and integrated supports and services for senior Albertans who need them; and
- assuring that appropriate standards and mechanisms are in place to protect seniors who may be vulnerable due to a variety of circumstances.

## The Role of Individuals and Families

Individuals have primary responsibility for preparing for their senior years. This includes meeting their own basic needs and securing the resources they will require for the lifestyle they choose as they age. The decisions and choices made by individuals throughout the course of their lives have implications for their senior years. For example, health, activity and financial decisions made earlier in life can influence one's health, financial circumstances and quality of life in older age. In consultation with their families and support networks, individual Albertans also have the responsibility to consider and plan for changes in their needs as they age. Considerations include:

- where and how they will live, including housing choices and living arrangements;
- access to supports and assistance, including emotional and caregiving support; and
- lifestyle choices, such as social activities, community involvement, and workforce participation.

Individuals, their families and support networks also play important roles in supporting each other's wellness and well-being. This includes encouraging and engaging in healthy lifestyles and activities, and accessing medical care and attention when necessary.

## The Role of Private and Non-Profit Sectors

The private sector and the non-profit and voluntary sector also play important roles in meeting the needs of Albertans. Members of these sectors are vital community partners who work with the Alberta government, municipal governments, and each other to identify and respond to the needs facing current and future Alberta seniors.

The private sector will always play an essential role in meeting the needs of Albertans of every age by responding to the ever-changing demands of the marketplace. Private sector organizations in Alberta communities offer a wide range of products and services in a variety of areas, including: housing; home support services (such as home maintenance or house cleaning); transportation; insurance; finance, investment and banking; supplemental health care; food and hospitality; and travel and recreation. The private sector is also a key source of innovation, addressing evolving market demands with new and different services.

Local employers are also important community partners. They offer a range of opportunities where older Albertans can continue to build and contribute skills and experience, mentor younger workers, maintain social linkages and earn income. Many employers also provide access to employer-sponsored benefits, such as life insurance, supplemental health benefits, critical illness insurance and pension plans. Employers also play a key role in explaining how these benefits may change as employees age or when they retire from their employer. An increasing number of Albertans may choose to remain engaged in the workforce in their senior years to earn extra income, maintain their quality of life, have access to employer-supported benefits, or to augment their pension. Older Albertans will be an important source of labour in the future. It will be important for employers to create and sustain age-friendly and barrier-free workplaces that support older workers.

The non-profit and voluntary sector also plays a vital role in meeting the needs of aging Albertans and works with governments and other partners to respond to these needs. In many cases, non-profit and voluntary sector organizations deliver services and supports on behalf of the Government of Alberta, to those Albertans who require them. Non-profit and voluntary sector organizations also provide community-based services to aging Albertans based on identified needs at the grassroots level, and deliver these services with the support of other community partners. This sector will continue to play a crucial part in helping the Alberta government identify and respond to aging Albertans in need; and in supporting these individuals through the provision of sustainable services and supports.

## The Role of Municipal Governments

Municipal governments in Alberta are responsible for providing leadership and direction on civic and community issues, and providing infrastructure, programs and services they deem necessary and appropriate for their municipalities. Municipal governments are in a unique position to facilitate collaboration among various organizations and sectors in their communities to respond to issues or challenges that impact citizens. They are also increasingly engaged in planning and responding to the challenges of growth and sustainable development.



As such, municipal governments have specific roles to play in preparing for and meeting the needs of Alberta's aging population, including:

- Ensuring the safety and security of Albertans in their communities as they age.
- Enabling Albertans to easily connect with and access municipal programs and services as they age.
- Developing and sustaining age-friendly environments in their communities, including municipal transportation systems, facilities, infrastructure, public spaces and land-use.
- Working with other community partners to encourage the creation of age-friendly developments and facilities, including a variety of housing options.
- Encouraging and promoting a culture of inclusiveness that engages and involves Albertans in their communities as they age.
- Educating local businesses, organizations and service providers about the changing needs of Albertans as they age, and encouraging them to adapt to these changing needs.
- Identifying and responding to local needs and priorities of senior Albertans in their communities.

Municipal governments also work collaboratively with the Government of Alberta in supporting Albertans. The nature of support will vary from community to community and over time, reflecting the unique local circumstances of Albertans as they age. Together with community partners, municipal governments are well placed to identify these changing circumstances and to work with the Alberta government in meeting the needs of future seniors.

## The Role of Other Governments

The federal government plays a key role in providing the primary source of income support for low-income seniors, through programs such as the Old Age Security (OAS) and the Guaranteed Income Supplement (GIS). The federal tax system also provides a number of credits for Canadian seniors. The Government of Alberta supplements the OAS and GIS programs by providing additional benefits to low-income seniors and a provincial tax system that complements the federal system.

The federal government also manages and administers the Canada Pension Plan (CPP). Along with other provincial and territorial governments, the Government of Alberta collaborates with the federal government in governing the CPP to ensure its long-term sustainability.

The Government of Alberta also works with the federal government, as well as other provincial and territorial governments, to address issues of significance to seniors. Alberta is a member of the Federal/Provincial/Territorial Ministers Responsible for Seniors Forum and has collaborated on a number of initiatives pertaining to healthy aging, elder abuse, income security, and other topics of importance. The Alberta government also works multilaterally with other provinces and territories on issues of mutual interest. For example, the Governments of Alberta, British Columbia and Saskatchewan have agreed to develop options for a supplementary pension plan to support the facilitation of improved financial security for future seniors. Other Canadian governments may elect to participate in this project in the future.

# PRINCIPLES FOR GOVERNMENT DECISION-MAKING

The *Aging Population Policy Framework* is designed to foster a coordinated and aligned approach across the Government of Alberta in developing policies, programs and services that meet the changing needs of Alberta's aging population. In fulfilling its role in meeting the needs and priorities of an aging population, Alberta government policies, programs and services will be consistent with the principles outlined below.

***Respectful of individual choice.*** The Alberta government should respect the choices of aging Albertans and their families, facilitate and support the ability of Albertans to make decisions and individual choices as they age, and encourage and inform Albertans in planning and preparing for their future needs.

***Aimed at encouraging the independence of Albertans.*** The Alberta government should encourage and support independence, self-reliance and self-determination among Albertans throughout their lives, facilitate and support individual responsibility, and should support families in helping aging Albertans maintain their independence.

***Proactive and flexible to changing circumstances.*** The Alberta government should examine, review and adapt to the changing needs and priorities of Alberta's aging population on an ongoing basis, and assess policies, programs and services to determine if they have sufficient flexibility and capacity to respond to these changing circumstances.

***Aligned towards achieving outcomes.*** Ministries should collaborate effectively to address the needs of Alberta's aging population in a coordinated fashion, and align their policies and programs towards achieving Alberta's desired outcomes in preparing for an aging population.

The *Aging Population Policy Framework* is designed to foster a coordinated and aligned approach across the Government of Alberta in developing policies, programs and services that meet the changing needs of Alberta's aging population.



***Affordable to taxpayers.*** Policies, programs and services aimed at meeting the needs and priorities of Alberta's aging population must be sustainable and affordable to taxpayers over the long term.

***Effective and efficient at achieving intended objectives.*** The Alberta government should strive to design and deliver programs and services in ways that make efficient and effective use of resources, and that have a meaningful impact in achieving outcomes for Alberta's aging population.

***Structured to assist Albertans most in need.*** Alberta government-funded programs, services and mechanisms should be designed to focus on assisting disadvantaged and vulnerable Alberta seniors so that they can meet their basic needs and remain safe and secure.

***Informed by evidence and input.*** The development of policies, programs and services should be informed by evidence to effectively reflect changing demographic and socio-economic factors. The input of Albertans and those involved in addressing the needs of aging Albertans should also help to inform the development of Alberta government actions concerning the aging population.


***Collaborative with communities.*** Communities are key partners in addressing the needs of Albertans as they age. The Alberta government should seek to collaborate in appropriate ways with the private sector, non-profit and voluntary sector, municipal governments, and other community partners, to identify and respond to the needs and priorities of an aging population.

***Fair and equitable to future generations.*** Addressing the needs and priorities of Alberta's aging population should be done in ways that are fair and equitable to future generations of Albertans; and should not place a disproportionate tax burden on future generations.

## Outcomes

The *Aging Population Policy Framework* establishes eight outcomes that reflect the broad goals Alberta will pursue in preparing to meet the needs of an aging population. All sectors, along with individual Albertans, have a role in achieving the following outcomes:

- Albertans have access to adequate financial resources to meet their needs in their senior years.

- 
- Alberta seniors are able to reside in the place that is appropriate for their circumstances.
  - Alberta seniors have access to a range of continuing care services that enable them to reside in an environment that is appropriate for their circumstances.
  - Alberta seniors are supported in maintaining optimum health as they age.
  - Albertans have access to safe, affordable, appropriate and accessible transportation options during their senior years.
  - Alberta seniors are supported in maintaining optimum independence in making decisions about their lives and are free from abuse.
  - Alberta seniors are engaged as full and welcome participants in their communities.
  - Alberta seniors are able to easily access Alberta government programs, services and supports.

# STRATEGIC POLICY DIRECTIONS

A number of Alberta government ministries currently work in collaboration to meet the needs of seniors through the development and delivery of policies, programs and services for seniors. The *Aging Population Policy Framework* aligns these efforts under an integrated set of strategic policy directions in eight key policy areas that have significance for Alberta's aging population.

These strategic policy directions clarify the Government of Alberta's responsibilities, and offer guidance on the overall approaches the Alberta government will pursue in responding to the needs of future seniors. They build on existing initiatives and partnerships within the Alberta government and inform further collaborative work. Related linkages to ongoing policy strategies are identified.

The strategic policy directions are designed to improve the cohesion of policy, programs and services in achieving desired outcomes and meeting the needs of a growing number of seniors.

## I. Financial Security and Income

A key determinant of overall well-being for seniors, and all citizens, is income level. Adequate financial resources are essential for establishing and maintaining good health, adequate housing and securing a reasonable standard of living. Albertans recognize that individuals are primarily responsible for their own financial security. Many will plan and prepare financially for their senior years so that they can afford the lifestyle of their choosing. Some will choose to remain in the workforce beyond the age of 65, either as an employee or in self-employment, to earn extra income, maintain their quality of life, have access to employer-supported benefits, or to augment their pension.

It is important that all Albertans have an informed understanding of the issues that may impact their future financial needs when they become seniors. The Alberta government has a role to play in encouraging individuals to make adequate financial preparations for their senior years and in connecting Albertans with information that can support them in their planning.

It is important that all Albertans have an informed understanding of the issues that may impact their future financial needs when they become seniors.

This includes raising and enhancing awareness among Albertans about their probable and possible personal and financial needs as they age.

Although the proportion of low-income seniors has been gradually declining over the past several decades, there will continue to be Albertans who reach their senior years without access to adequate financial resources to meet their basic needs. The circumstances of future seniors will continue to be impacted by a number of factors such as changes in the costs of living, decreasing private pension plan participation, lower private savings rates and other broader economic conditions.

Provincial assistance will need to be targeted effectively to provide adequate support to low-income seniors.

While the federal government provides the majority of income support to low-income seniors, through programs like OAS and GIS, the Alberta government will continue to have a role in supplementing this assistance. Provincial assistance for these individuals will need to be targeted effectively to provide adequate support to low-income seniors while remaining affordable and sustainable.

## Outcome

Albertans have access to adequate financial resources to meet their needs in their senior years.

## Policy Directions

1. Assist Albertans in planning for their financial needs as seniors.
  - Raise Albertans' awareness of the needs they are likely to have in their senior years and how they may secure the financial resources to meet those needs.
  - Encourage Albertans to consider the possible circumstances, and related costs, they may face in their senior years to encourage adequate financial planning.
  - Encourage Albertans to consider how choices and decisions made throughout life may impact the financial resources available in their senior years.



- Increase Albertans' awareness of available resources and materials to support them in making financial plans and preparations for their senior years.
  - Assist Albertans in improving their financial literacy with respect to savings and investment vehicles and potential risk factors for financial abuse.
  - Explore savings and pension options for Albertans who do not have access to a private pension plan.
2. Support Albertans who choose to remain engaged in the workforce in their senior years.
- Provide employment and career services to support mature workers in the workforce.
  - Develop resources for employers that support the engagement of a multigenerational workforce and age-friendly work environments.
  - Encourage and support age-friendly employment policies and practices (including those related to pension plans and supports for caregivers) among employers.
3. Enable appropriate and effective allocation of government-funded financial supports for seniors who lack the financial resources to meet their basic needs.
- Review, on a regular basis, eligibility criteria for seniors programs and services in light of the changing circumstances of Alberta's aging population, the cost of living and broader economic conditions.
  - Examine programs and services for low-income seniors to ensure assistance is being provided in the most efficient ways possible and is having a meaningful impact in achieving outcomes for these seniors.
  - Provide assistance to seniors who may encounter extraordinary needs or circumstances.
  - Examine the cumulative impact of changes to policies, programs or services that provide assistance to seniors when considering new initiatives, strategies or actions.

## Related Linkages

- *Building and Educating Tomorrow's Workforce*
- *Mature Workers in Alberta and British Columbia: Understanding the Issues and Opportunities*
- *Living Literacy: A Literacy Framework for Alberta's Next Generation*

## II. Housing and Aging in the Right Place

As with today's seniors, the majority of whom live in their private homes, future seniors will wish to remain in the dwelling they own or rent for as long as appropriate and practical. Seniors may have a number of choices in selecting their housing, such as whether to rent or own, the type of structure (e.g., single family dwelling, condo, apartment, etc.), and the community in which to reside. These choices are based on a variety of factors, including a senior's personal situation, lifestyle preference, considerations such as cost and location, changing needs that occur with age, and the quantity and diversity of housing options available.

The objective is for seniors to have access to living arrangements that are appropriate for their circumstances. This includes housing choices that have been designed with age-friendliness in mind. The Alberta government will play a role in encouraging and supporting the incorporation of age-friendly and barrier-free designs among public and private sector partners to help seniors age in the right place.

The private sector will be encouraged to respond to the changing housing needs and demands of seniors by offering a variety of housing options and products from which seniors can choose. However, for those seniors who lack the financial resources to meet their basic needs, choices will be more limited. The Alberta government will need to collaborate with its partners to support the development of a sufficient supply of affordable housing and supportive living units for seniors most in need, especially in rural and remote areas, where options are often limited. This will require working with municipal governments, the private and non-profit sectors, and other community partners.

Access to home supports, such as home maintenance services, and adaptations to the home will be important to enable seniors to live in their own homes for as long as reasonable and practical. Rural and remote communities are often challenged by gaps in these services due to a lack of providers serving their smaller populations. This can have the effect of pushing seniors out of their homes and communities prematurely, which can lead to loss of social connectedness and deterioration of physical and emotional health. The Alberta government will need to work with community partners to provide a reasonable level of assistance for home supports and adaptations to those seniors most in need, and support an appropriate level of services in rural areas.

## Outcome

Alberta seniors are able to reside in the place that is appropriate for their circumstances.

## Policy Directions

1. Support and foster the development of sufficient affordable housing units for those seniors most in need.
  - Work with municipal governments and other community partners to identify and respond to the affordable housing needs of seniors in their communities.
  - Facilitate the development of affordable housing options for seniors most in need, including those in rural and remote communities, through the use of federal-provincial partnerships and initiatives.
  - Ensure the safety and security of residents of seniors' housing developments by assuring that codes and standards are in place and enforced.
  - Support the incorporation of age-friendly and barrier-free designs in housing options that are funded by the Alberta government.
  - Ensure that housing legislation safeguards seniors and other vulnerable consumers, and provides mechanisms for resolving disputes.
2. Encourage market innovation and greater market choice in housing options, especially in rural and remote areas of the province.
  - Explore ways of increasing the use of barrier-free designs (e.g., codes and standards) in the development of various kinds of congregate housing options.
  - Explore ways of fostering innovation among private and non-profit organizations in developing housing options to meet the changing needs of Alberta's aging population.
3. Ensure reasonable government-funded home support services are efficiently delivered to those seniors who need them.
  - Work with community partners to expand the provision of home support services (e.g., cooking, housekeeping, laundry, etc.) to those seniors most in need, especially in rural and remote communities that face gaps in services.

- Work with community partners to support access to home adaptations for those seniors most in need.
- Regularly review health-related supports to assess whether they are being appropriately and effectively allocated, and if they sufficiently reflect the changing needs of an aging population.

## Related Linkages

- *A Plan for Alberta: Ending Homelessness in 10 Years*
- *Continuing Care Strategy — Aging in the Right Place*
- *The Alberta Injury Control Strategy*
- *Barrier-Free Design Guide*

## III. Continuing Care

Alberta's continuing care system provides Albertans with the health, personal care and accommodation services they need to support their independence and quality of life. Continuing care services are provided in three streams: the *home living* stream, for people who live in independent settings; the *supportive living* stream, which combines accommodation services with other supports and care; and the *facility living* stream, which includes long-term care facilities like nursing homes and auxiliary hospitals.

Most Alberta seniors will prefer to receive continuing care services in a home living scenario. As the number of seniors in Alberta increases, it will be important to develop new and innovative alternatives to facility-based care, including ways of optimizing the delivery of appropriate health and personal care services in the home.

For other seniors, supportive living and facility living arrangements may be more appropriate for their circumstances. For example, seniors with complex health situations or those facing multiple conditions will require safe, high-quality settings that meet their needs. It is expected that the prevalence of one complex health condition, dementia, will double in Alberta by 2038, if there are no significant new scientific discoveries or interventions. This will have considerable implications for Alberta's continuing care system.



Fostering choice in accommodation in supportive and facility living settings — including considerations such as space, amenities, modernity, location and cost — will be necessary to address the requirements of an increasingly diverse population of seniors, including those who are in low-income situations. The Alberta government will seek to work with the private sector, the non-profit sector and other community partners to support the development of a greater range and supply of supportive living and facility living accommodations.

The Alberta government must ensure that publicly funded health services meet established standards of quality, and supportive living and facility living centres meet established accommodation standards. It is critical that these standards evolve to reflect contemporary care practices and the changing needs of seniors, while optimizing the use of resources and supporting long-term affordability.

It is expected that the prevalence of one complex health condition, dementia, will double in Alberta by 2038, if there are no significant new scientific discoveries or interventions. This will have considerable implications for the continuing care system.

## Outcome

Alberta seniors have access to a range of continuing care services that enable them to reside in an environment that is appropriate for their circumstances.

## Policy Directions

- 1. Foster the development of an increased, diverse supply of affordable living options to enable Albertans to age in the right place.
- 2. Explore the development of accommodation-related fee structures for supportive living and facility living settings that encourage additional investment by community partners.
- 3. Develop and implement a capital funding model that will support private and non-profit sector development of new and innovative living options that offer a greater range of choice to seniors and reflect their needs.
- 4. Provide capital funding supports to facilitate the development of supportive living units that meet the changing needs of seniors.

- Support low-income seniors by providing appropriate assistance that enables them to live in their own homes or access supportive living or facility living settings.
2. Increase the supply and range of home care and community care services to assist Albertans in receiving services in the community.
- Increase home care and self-managed care<sup>2</sup> services.
  - Facilitate community living by enabling individuals with stable medical conditions to transition from a traditional facility setting to a more appropriate community setting.
  - Establish support teams in emergency departments to assist seniors who may not require emergency care, but who cannot be safely cared for at home due to their service needs.
  - Increase caregiver support available through home care, such as counselling, education, skill training and enhanced respite care.
  - Enhance case management services to provide seamless service to clients with multiple and complex health problems to ensure they receive appropriate services and that their care is provided in the right place, at the right time and by the right health professional.
3. Monitor the provision of health care and accommodation services provided in long-term care facilities, supportive living units and through home care to ensure that safe and quality services are provided.
- Develop, update and enforce continuing care health service and accommodation standards so that they reflect best care practices of the system.
  - Conduct regular reviews of all licensed supportive living and facility living settings to assess compliance with accommodation standards, and make the results publicly available.
  - Evaluate, on a regular basis, the provision of health care services by home care providers, licensed supportive living and facility living providers.

<sup>2</sup> Self-managed care is a funding option in which eligible home care clients can manage the provision of their own personal support services (i.e., they can hire a caregiver of their choosing to provide services such as bathing, feeding and medication).

- Based on research and best practices, develop standardized design processes that support optimum safety for residents of publicly-funded supportive living and facility living settings.
  - Ensure standards remain effective, and evolve as necessary, to reflect best practice information and the changing needs of Alberta seniors.
4. Provide support for an appropriate level of services to facilitate aging-in-place among seniors who are in home living settings.
- Support investments to provide an optimal level of home care to seniors and encourage innovative approaches in home care delivery.
  - Support community partners to efficiently and effectively deliver personal support services to seniors who need them.

## Related Linkages

- *Continuing Care Strategy — Aging in the Right Place*
- *Vision 2020: The Future of Health Care in Alberta*
- *A Foundation for Alberta's Health System — Report of the Minister's Advisory Committee on Health*
- *Putting People First: Part One, Recommendations for an Alberta Health Act*

## IV. Healthy Aging and Health Care

Albertans wish to remain as healthy as possible throughout their lives, including during their senior years. Healthy aging is a “lifelong process of optimizing opportunities for improving and preserving health and physical, social and mental wellness, independence, quality of life and enhancing successful life course transitions”.<sup>3</sup> Individuals, families, community partners and the Alberta government are all responsible for contributing to the healthy aging of Albertans.

An important component of healthy aging is healthy living. Engaging in healthy living practices throughout life — such as a nutritious diet, regular physical and mental/ cognitive activity, avoidance of tobacco, and the prevention of illness and injury — helps contribute to healthy aging in seniors. Maintaining social connections and relationships can also play an important factor in healthy aging. Providing social and recreational opportunities for seniors is important for preventing social isolation,

<sup>3</sup> Health Canada, 2002.

which can lead to deterioration in health. Social connectedness has a positive impact on seniors' mental, emotional and physical health.

The Alberta government has a role in developing policies that support healthy aging throughout life. This includes facilitating and supporting community-led initiatives that encourage healthy living and foster social connectedness among current and future seniors.

Today, older Canadians are living longer and are generally healthier than generations before them. Healthy living, and disease and injury prevention can help extend these trends to future seniors. At the same time, the majority of seniors have at least one chronic disease or condition. Seniors with chronic conditions, reduced mobility and disabilities risk becoming trapped in their homes and isolated. As the population increases, health-related supports will need to be in place to respond holistically to the needs of these seniors.

As the population increases, health-related supports will need to be in place to respond holistically to the needs of these seniors.

Mental health services must also be integrated with the broader health system to effectively meet the needs of a growing aging population. The mental health issues of seniors can be neglected despite the fact that a number of social and psychological determinants, such as retirement and social isolation, can make seniors more vulnerable to mental illness and can exacerbate cognitive disorders like dementia. Statistics show that 20 per cent of Canadian seniors currently have some form of mental illness. It is expected that with the increasing number of seniors in Alberta, seniors' mental health issues will continue to be important and appropriate health care, home care and community care services will be needed.

The Alberta government has a responsibility to sustain an affordable, accessible, and efficient health care system while continually striving towards meeting the health care needs of Albertans in effective ways. This means health care services should deliver the right service, at the right time, in the right place and at the right cost.

It will be important to better connect seniors, and all Albertans, with the health services they require. New, innovative and cost-effective delivery approaches must be pursued and expanded, such as telehealth, primary health care options, and the use of patient navigators that guide Albertans to the care they need. Rural



communities must have access to an appropriate level of health services, with local services linked and coordinated with complex care facilities typically located in urban areas.

An aging population also has implications for the health workforce. Alberta will require a health workforce that is deployed to match the demand for services, and trained to adapt and respond to the changing needs of seniors, and the unique demands and realities of senior care.

## Outcome

Alberta seniors are supported in maintaining optimum health as they age.

## Policy Directions

1. Facilitate community and individual efforts to engage in healthy living practices that will help achieve active and healthy aging.
  - Provide leadership and support to municipal governments and community partners in encouraging healthy aging in Alberta communities.
  - Provide leadership and support for physical activity and fall and injury prevention strategies focused on an aging population.
  - Provide Albertans with health and lifestyle information to support them in making healthy choices that reduce the risk of disease and injury, and increase the likelihood of healthy aging.
  - Provide leadership and support for initiatives which enhance knowledge about the mental health needs of seniors, and partner with key stakeholders and service providers to develop innovative responses to these needs.
  - Provide leadership and support for improved health, personal fitness, and personal fulfillment through participation in recreation, active living and sports.
2. Support the provision of timely access to efficiently delivered, high-quality health care services that meet the needs of seniors.
  - Support the use of telehealth options for preventive care, treatment and increased access in local communities.
  - Provide the right level of services, at the right time, by the right provider to Alberta seniors in the setting that is right for their circumstances, in cost-effective ways.

- Support rural Albertans in accessing health services, including those related to mental health, and facilities that support complex care.
  - Support awareness and understanding of the health-related needs of seniors, and the importance of healthy aging, among individuals working in health professions.
  - Examine health-related programs and services for seniors to assess whether they reflect the changing needs of seniors and are administered as efficiently, effectively and affordably as possible.
  - Support primary health care and care-in-the-community initiatives, such as the development of primary care networks in communities throughout Alberta.
3. Match Alberta's health workforce supply to demand for services.
- Develop incentive and training programs to encourage local recruitment of key health professionals and other staff.
  - Implement a provincial workforce strategy focused on recruiting and retaining skilled health service providers, including locations where there is an undersupply.
  - Develop incentive programs modeled after initiatives such as the *Rural Physician Action Plan* to encourage members of other health professions to work in rural settings.

## Related Linkages

- *Vision 20/20: The Future of Health Care in Alberta*
- *Continuing Care Strategy — Aging in the Right Place*
- *Building and Educating Tomorrow's Workforce*
- *Health Workforce Action Plan*
- *Alberta Injury Control Strategy*
- *Framework for a Healthy Alberta*
- *Active Alberta: A Recreation, Active Living and Sport Policy (draft)*

## V. Transportation and Mobility

The ability to reach one's destinations is important for maintaining well-being, quality of life and independence. Like all Albertans, seniors rely on transportation for their day-to-day activities, such as attending appointments, accessing health care, buying groceries, getting to work, and attending social and recreational activities.

It is expected that future seniors will continue to be increasingly mobile and will require access to safe and reliable transportation options. Driving is expected to remain the most popular of these options. Chronological age alone should not determine an individual's ability to drive; seniors are a diverse group and many remain excellent drivers well into their older years. However, there are a number of common misconceptions around seniors and driving. The Alberta government has an important role to play in addressing inaccurate perceptions about aging drivers and increasing the public's awareness that age is not a determinant of driving ability. It is important for both the public and media to recognize that certain health conditions, as opposed to age, may impact one's ability to drive safely. In some cases, these health conditions may be associated with the aging process.

However, some seniors will face health challenges such as arthritis, or diminished hearing or vision that may make driving more difficult or unsafe. Families, health professionals and governments all have a role to play in helping ensure that seniors remain safe behind the wheel. By having access to useful information, families and health professionals can help seniors with the transition from driving to other transportation options. The Alberta government can assist in providing this information, and in researching strategies and approaches that facilitate safer driving on the part of all citizens.

The lifestyle of seniors who are no longer able to drive can change dramatically. It is important that affordable and accessible transportation options be in place for these individuals. This is particularly the case in rural areas of the province, where public transit systems are limited and gaps in transportation services exist. Seniors who reside in rural and remote communities often need to travel to larger urban centres for medical services, other appointments, or to access other basic needs; inter-municipal transportation services are therefore a key concern.

Municipal governments, the private sector and the non-profit sector will play significant roles in providing transportation alternatives, so that seniors who are unable to drive can retain their mobility and independence. Options such as public

transit, and privately-operated and non-profit transportation services will all continue to be part of the transportation mix. The Alberta government will have a role to play in providing accessible transportation options to those seniors most in need.

It will also be necessary to encourage and support the mobility of people on foot and users of wheelchairs, walkers and scooters. Community infrastructure will need to be planned and designed in ways that facilitate these types of transportation aids and options. The Alberta government has a role to play in encouraging and supporting municipal governments and communities in recognizing and adapting to the changing needs of seniors in their communities.

## Outcome

Albertans have access to safe, affordable, appropriate and accessible transportation options during their senior years.

## Policy Directions

1. Support the ability of Albertans aged 65 and older to continue driving safely.
  - Facilitate the provision of information and resources to older drivers, their family members and health care professionals regarding medical conditions that can impact safe driving, and about the transition from driving to other options.
  - Work with medical schools, public health organizations and other community partners to provide physicians and other health professionals with information and tools to assist them in making fair and evidence-based decisions about driving ability.
  - Support the development of research and evidence-based best practices to identify and respond to risk factors associated with aging and medically at-risk drivers.
  - Ensure highway traffic legislation and design of traffic elements (e.g., signage, lighting, etc.) reflects the changing needs of an aging population of drivers.
2. Support the development of affordable, accessible and appropriate transportation options for seniors who are unable to or do not wish to drive.
  - Work with municipal governments and other community partners to identify and address the changing transportation needs of seniors in their communities, especially in rural and remote communities.



- Examine ways of providing financially accessible transportation options to those seniors most in need.
- Facilitate and encourage age-friendly municipal and community infrastructure that helps Alberta seniors retain their mobility.

## Related Linkages

- *Alberta Traffic Safety Plan*
- *20-Year Capital Plan*
- *Land-use Framework*

## VI. Safety and Security

While a majority of seniors will live their lives independently, there are some who may require assistance in making personal or financial decisions. There are also seniors who are vulnerable to various forms of abuse, frauds and scams. Given the aging population, there is likely to be a greater number of seniors facing these kinds of circumstances. The Alberta government has a very important role in addressing these kinds of issues, to reinforce the safety and security of Alberta's seniors. This involves support for ongoing initiatives aimed at making Alberta communities safer, and actions focused on addressing safety and security issues that impact seniors.

The safety and security of Albertans can be compromised when they have reduced capacity to make decisions about their own affairs. Future seniors, and indeed all Albertans, need to be encouraged to plan for a time when they may not have the ability to make decisions about their personal care, where they will live, their medical treatment, or how their finances and property will be managed.

Legal instruments exist to address these situations, including personal directives and powers of attorney. However, there are opportunities to improve public awareness and knowledge about these options. The Alberta government has an important role in raising awareness among future seniors about the kinds of decisions they may face in the future, and the options they can utilize to name a trusted person to make decisions on their behalf if they become unable to make their own decisions. It is important for Albertans to be aware of these legal tools so they are better informed in planning for their senior years.

When Albertans do not or cannot plan ahead for their decision-making needs, the new *Adult Guardianship and Trusteeship Act* (AGTA) provides options and safeguards to protect vulnerable adults who have reduced capacity to make all of their own decisions. The AGTA recognizes that adults have a range of decision making abilities. It also establishes innovative options so Albertans can receive decision-making assistance according to their needs, thereby helping them maintain as much autonomy as possible.

Seniors may also be vulnerable to abuse. Elder abuse can take many forms including physical, emotional, sexual and financial, and often multiple forms of abuse occur at once. The most common forms of abuse are emotional and financial, and family members and caregivers can be perpetrators of such abuse. Although there is not yet a significant body of research and data on elder abuse, it is expected the incidence of elder abuse will increase in correlation with Alberta's aging population. There is a need to raise Albertans' awareness about this issue and enhance our efforts to prevent, recognize, report and respond to situations of elder abuse. Addressing this complex issue will require cooperation among all sectors as well as individual Albertans.

Legislation such as Alberta's *Protection for Persons in Care Act* (PPCA) helps to address the issue of elder abuse in publicly-funded care facilities, such as seniors' lodges or long-term care facilities. The PPCA makes it mandatory for every individual or service provider who has reasonable and probable grounds to believe there is or has been abuse against a person who is receiving services from a publicly-funded care facility to report the abuse to authorities. In addition, recent amendments to the *Personal Directives Act* and the introduction of the AGTA, allow for government intervention in situations where a decision maker is causing harm to the adult they represent. The Alberta government will continue to work with its partners to raise awareness about elder abuse and contribute to its eradication through the enhancement and promotion of legislative measures like the PPCA and AGTA.

Supporting the caregiving efforts of family and community members will also assist in keeping seniors safe. As part of Alberta's wider strategy on strengthening the continuing care system, resources will be coordinated to support caregivers, including the delivery of supports and services that reduce and prevent incidents of stress and burnout.

## Outcome

Alberta seniors are supported in maintaining optimum independence in making decisions about their lives and are free from abuse.

## Policy Directions

1. Increase awareness about elder abuse and neglect, and how to prevent and respond to it.
  - Lead and support efforts to increase awareness among service providers, caregivers, and the general public about elder abuse, the factors that contribute to it and how to prevent it.
  - Enhance availability and knowledge of resource and education materials on elder abuse prevention.
  - Provide leadership and support for training and educational opportunities on elder abuse prevention and awareness for health care professionals, service providers and others who are in regular contact with seniors.
  - Enhance public and service provider awareness of the *Protection for Persons in Care Act*.
2. Enhance the capacity of Alberta communities to respond to situations of elder abuse.
  - Facilitate the development and implementation of coordinated community response models focused on addressing elder abuse.
  - Support the development of guidelines and protocols for addressing abuse in community settings.
  - Support best-practice research on interventions in non-criminal cases of elder abuse.
3. Encourage advance planning with respect to financial and personal decisions.
  - Promote public awareness about the mechanisms that support advance planning, such as personal directives, wills, and powers of attorney.
  - Provide information and supports to Albertans who wish to develop advance planning mechanisms such as personal directives, wills, and powers of attorney.
  - Improve uptake of these mechanisms among different cultural groups.

4. Facilitate the maintenance of personal autonomy with respect to personal and financial decision-making.
  - Promote awareness and education about Alberta's new *Adult Guardianship and Trusteeship Act*.
  - Provide supports to Albertans who require assistance in making personal and financial decisions in circumstances where they are not capable of doing so themselves.
5. Provide family and community caregivers with access to supports in their communities which reflect and address the challenges of caring for an aging population with changing circumstances.
  - Facilitate and support the availability of community-based respite care and other programs that support the role of family and community caregivers.
  - Support the provision of education, training and counselling programs for family and community caregivers.
  - Provide assistance to caregivers to support decision making about personal and financial matters for individuals who lack capacity.
  - Examine ways of efficiently providing assistance to family caregivers most in need.

### Related Linkages

- *Strategy for the Prevention of Family Violence and Bullying*
- *Continuing Care Strategy — Aging in the Right Place*
- *Safe Communities Initiative*



## VII. Supportive Communities

The aging population presents many positive opportunities for strengthening the fabric of Alberta's communities. Albertans aged 65 and older have wisdom, experience and expertise to contribute to non-profit and voluntary sector organizations, other community organizations, the labour force, and to their families and friends. Seniors are an integral part of our society and play important roles as parents, grandparents, mentors, caregivers and volunteers.

Seniors should be recognized, appreciated and valued by society for their contributions and should have opportunities to engage as full and meaningful members of their communities and society at large. This engagement can be facilitated by supporting the creation of age-friendly environments, particularly through the implementation of strategies that enhance accessibility for seniors and encourage community involvement.

The promotion of age-friendly communities is a global movement. The World Health Organization (WHO) has worked to engage cities worldwide in developing their communities in ways that support healthy aging among residents. Many countries, including Canada, have developed national and regional initiatives that champion age-friendliness and build on the WHO's work.

Encouraging Alberta communities to become age-friendly will help support seniors continuing to reside in and contribute to their communities, and remain socially connected. Many aspects of community life need to be considered in fostering overall age-friendliness, including: outdoor spaces and recreation, transportation, housing, respect and social inclusion, social participation, communication and information, civic participation and employment, and community support and health services.

The pursuit of age-friendly communities is best led at the community level with support from municipal, provincial and federal governments. Community partners are well placed to identify and provide opportunities to engage and involve seniors in social, recreational and physical activities in their communities. Municipal governments should strive to provide community infrastructure and public parks

Seniors are an integral part of our society and play important roles as parents, grandparents, mentors, caregivers and volunteers.

that are safe and accessible to seniors, to facilitate physical activity and social involvement. The role of the Alberta government is to act as a facilitator to communities in supporting the creation of age-friendly environments.

An important component in building and supporting age-friendly communities is the availability of non-profit and voluntary sector organizations, which deliver many programs and services to seniors on behalf of the Alberta government. In working together with these organizations, the Government of Alberta needs to ensure that the mandates of all parties and partners are clear, and that outcomes and expectations are plainly communicated. In addition, unambiguous, predictable and effective financial arrangements which support these outcomes and expectations are required.

The Government of Alberta also has a role in working with these organizations, through forums such as the Alberta Nonprofit/Voluntary Sector Initiative, to support them in meeting the unique needs and challenges of seniors in their communities, and to foster coordination of service delivery in Alberta communities.

## Outcome

Alberta seniors are engaged as full and welcome participants in their communities.

## Policy Directions

1. Encourage and support Alberta communities in becoming age-friendly.
  - Facilitate the sharing of information, resources and best practices to inform and assist municipal governments in pursuing age-friendliness in their communities.
  - Ensure that Government of Alberta financial contributions to public infrastructure are leveraged so that infrastructure incorporates barrier-free standards.
2. Support and encourage the recognition of seniors' contributions to Alberta communities.
  - Explore options for including senior- and age-related issues in school curriculum.
  - Promote volunteerism among seniors and raise awareness about the value and importance of these contributions.

- Promote the development of a culture that values and appreciates seniors.
  - Support educational and training opportunities about age-friendliness to staff of non-profit and voluntary sector organizations that regularly work with seniors.
3. Work with non-profit and voluntary sector organizations in developing and providing services and supports to seniors that reflect community needs and values.
- Ensure that Alberta government-funded non-profit organizations have clarity in their mandate about funding for programs and services for seniors, and how this funding should be allocated.
  - Facilitate the improvement of seniors' access to Alberta government-funded services and supports delivered by community partners.

## Related Linkages

- *Federal/Provincial/Territorial Ministers Responsible for Seniors — Age-Friendly Rural and Remote Communities: A Guide*
- *WHO Global Age-Friendly Cities Project*
- *Alberta Nonprofit/Voluntary Sector Initiative*

## VIII. Access to Government

The Alberta government funds a number of programs, services and supports which provide assistance to Alberta seniors. Some of these are delivered directly by the Government of Alberta while others are delivered by community partners.

Alberta seniors may not be aware of the services and supports that are available in their community. Some seniors may be aware of these services, but have difficulty locating and connecting with them. It can also be challenging for aging Albertans, their families and support networks to navigate multiple ministries and application processes to access the services and supports they require.

Seniors are also becoming increasingly adaptive to new technologies. In the future, some seniors may feel more comfortable accessing services and supports in traditional ways (e.g., telephone, in-person), while others may wish to access

information and services through technological means (e.g., internet). It is important that the Alberta Government provide a variety of service platforms to future seniors.

To meet the needs of a larger and more diverse population of seniors, including a growing number of Aboriginal and immigrant seniors, it will be important for Alberta government programs and services to be as efficient, effective and coordinated as possible. Programs and services should be aligned to facilitate ease of access among seniors, their family members and caregivers. This includes streamlining application processes within the Alberta government.

Programs and services should be aligned to facilitate ease of access among seniors, their family members and caregivers.

## Outcome

Alberta seniors are able to easily access Alberta government programs, services and supports.

## Policy Directions

1. Examine opportunities to align Alberta government programs and services to make them more accessible to seniors who are in need.
  - Enhance collaboration among ministries in designing and delivering programs and services, to align policy objectives and the operation of programs and services to the extent practicable.
  - Examine ways of delivering Alberta government programs and services to seniors in more seamless and integrated ways, so that these programs and services work together effectively to achieve desired outcomes.
  - Encourage consideration of the cumulative impacts of policy decisions across government when contemplating policy or program decisions that impact seniors.
  - Work with community partners to support seniors from different cultural and ethnic backgrounds in effectively accessing government programs, services and supports.



2. Explore ways of improving the connection between Alberta government-funded programs and services and those seniors in need.
  - Work with other governments and community partners to raise awareness among seniors about programs and services that are available from all levels of government and at the community level.
  - Simplify application processes for provincially administered seniors programs.
  - Explore a variety of methods (e.g., in-person, telephone, internet) for enabling seniors to access Alberta government programs and services through integrated mechanisms.

### Related Linkages

- *Service Alberta, Citizen Services Initiative*



## IMPLEMENTATION

The *Aging Population Policy Framework* sets out the Government of Alberta's overall strategic directions and desired long-term policy outcomes regarding current and future seniors. Pursuing these directions and outcomes will require ongoing collaborative work among Alberta government ministries. It will also require enhanced cooperation, partnership and effort on the part of all sectors and individual Albertans.

Alberta Seniors and Community Supports (ASCS) is responsible for encouraging and supporting the independence, well-being and inclusion of seniors through cross-ministerial collaboration on policies, programs, services and supports. Reflecting this responsibility, ASCS will facilitate the implementation of the *Aging Population Policy Framework*, and the coordinated development of policies, programs and supports consistent with the Framework.

Through collaboration among appropriate Alberta government ministries, municipalities and community partners, implementation of the Framework will help Alberta respond to the changing needs of the aging population, and achieve shared, lasting, positive outcomes for Alberta's current and future seniors.







